

Sonny Perdue
Governor

Georgia Department of Veterans Service

Pete Wheeler
Commissioner

VETERANS BULLETIN

Georgia Veterans ... guardians of liberty
Fall 2009

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Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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Georgia Veterans Bulletin

The *Georgia Veterans Bulletin* is published quarterly by the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, Public Information Division, Floyd Veterans Memorial Building, Room E-970, Atlanta, GA 30334-4800.

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| Ray Hendrix | Chairman, Veterans Service Board |
| Pete Wheeler | Commissioner |
| Tom Cook | Assistant Commissioner, Field Operations & Claims |
| Dan Holtz | Assistant Commissioner, Administration, Health & Memorials |
| Heldon (Bill) Jung | Director, Veterans Education & Training |
| Brian Zeringue | Public Information Manager |
| Jon Suggs | Editor, Veterans Bulletin |

A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

Welcome to the digital edition of the *Georgia Veterans Bulletin*. If you are already familiar with our publication, you will find the same valuable information that has always been in these pages, accompanied by a few additions and enhancements.

By bringing the *Bulletin* to you online, the Georgia Department of Veterans Service is saving valuable budget dollars, a necessary choice given our state's current fiscal status.

But this is more than a mere cost-saving change. There are many advantages to digital publication, and we aim to make use of much this medium has to offer.

Most notably, this marks a move from a quarterly to monthly publication schedule. We intend to bring you more news, more often.

Remember, every hypertext link in this document is clickable. Wherever you see a website address, such as www.va.gov, you can click on the link and be taken to that site.

We would like to encourage you to subscribe to our news feed via RSS. You may do so here: http://sdvs.georgia.gov/rss/sdvs_press_releases.xml. Whenever a new Bulletin is published, whenever the Department issues any news release, you will be among the first to know.

As always, thank you for your service to our country and do not hesitate to call upon us.

About the cover: Click the Veterans Day poster image to be taken to the VA website for 2009 Veterans Day resources.



In Memoriam



**This issue of the
Georgia Veterans Bulletin
is dedicated to the memory of
Geraldine O. "Gerry" Wheeler**

Geraldine O. "Gerry" Wheeler, 82, passed away early Sunday morning, September 13, 2009.

Mrs. Wheeler served as a U.S. Army Cadet Nurse from 1945 to 1946. She attended Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University) and later worked for the U.S. Public Health Service.

She was married Oct. 19, 1949, to Pete Wheeler, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, and lived most of her adult life in Atlanta.

Mrs. Wheeler was preceded in death by her daughter, Jane Watkins. Survivors include her husband of 59 years, Pete Wheeler; daughter and son-in-law, Frances and Mark Jones of Atlanta; son and daughter-in-law, Peter B. "Chip" and Debbie Wheeler of Lawrenceville; son-in-law, John Watkins of Snellville; and six grandchildren, Matthew Wheeler, Joshua Watkins, Joanna Watkins, Alex Jones, Charles Jones, and Jonathan Jones.

A funeral service was held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, September 16, at Decatur First United Methodist Church, with Bishop Bevel Jones, Dr. David Jones, and Dr. Claude Smithmier officiating. The committal service was at 4 p.m. Wednesday at Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Milledgeville.

A. S. Turner & Sons handled funeral arrangements.

A guest registry is available at http://www.asimas.com/ASIMAS/asturner/guestbook.jsp?domain_id=126&deceased_id=206226.



*The Georgia Department of Veterans Service
cordially invites you
to attend the*

“Governor’s Veterans’ Day Proclamation Signing”

*1 p.m., Thursday, October 29, 2009
State Capital Building
Atlanta*





Marilyn D. Ferguson, Manager of the SDVS Field Office at VAMC-Atlanta, was honored with the Governor's Award for Individual Customer Service Excellence during the Third Annual Governor's Customer Service Awards. BELOW: Governor Sonny Perdue delivers the award. RIGHT: SDVS HR Director Rick Graham, SDVS Claims Director George Langford, Ferguson, Commissioner Pete Wheeler, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations & Claims Tom Cook, Assistant Commissioner for Administration, Health & Memorials Dan Holtz



Highlights of...

SDVS At Work For Georgia Veterans

- Mr. Joel Willis, VFW DSO, participated in a July 4th celebration at Conyers Equestrian Park. He distributed VA benefits information.

- The BVA Travel Board visited the Claims Division the week of July 6-10. The BVA Travel Board judges were very pleased with the efforts and expertise of our Counselors.

- Mr. Dan Cravey and Mr. Neil Slay conducted a Veterans Benefits seminar at American Legion Post 267, Columbus, Georgia, on Saturday, August 8, 2009.

- Pre-deployment briefings for the 169th (GA NG) will be conducted on Monday, August 31, 2009 at Armstrong Atlantic State University, 11935 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia.

- Pre-deployment briefings for the 810th (GA NG) will be conducted on Saturday, September 19, 2009 at East Georgia College, 131 College Circle, Swainsboro, Georgia.

- SDVS Valdosta and SDVS Glennville continue to support the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP). Ed Kent, Manager Valdosta conducts TAP Briefings at Moody AFB once a month. Tonya Malpass, Manager Glennville conducts TAP Briefings at Ft. Stewart each week.

- Mr. George Langford, Director, Claims Division, represented SDVS and participated in the Georgia National Guard Family Readiness Conference, August 15



– 16, at the Renaissance Atlanta Hotel Downtown.

- Ms. Rita Barnhart, Manager, SDVS Canton, presented a Veterans Benefits Briefing at Cottages of Woodstock, 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, August 26, 2009.

- Pre-deployment briefings for the 169th (GA NG) were conducted on Monday, August 31, 2009 at Armstrong Atlantic State University, 11935 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia.

- Mr. Tom Cook and Mr. Mike Roby represented SDVS and participated in the 1st Annual WIA Appreciation Event, Saturday, August 22, 2009 at the Tom Lowe Shooting Grounds, 3070 Merk Road, SW, Atlanta, Georgia.

- Ms. Jo Ann Dixon, Manager, Statesboro, supported Pre-deployment briefings for the 810th (GA NG) which were conducted on Saturday, September 19, 2009 at East Georgia College, 131 College Circle,

Swainsboro, Georgia.

- Mr. Donald Holland, SDVS Claims Division, represented SDVS at a Health Fair September 19, 2009 at the World Congress Center, Atlanta.

- The American Legion and the VFW co-sponsored “Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims” (TRIP) Training, September 28 – 30, 2009 at the Atlanta VA Medical Center and VA Regional Office. Once this training is completed, all of our current employees in Field Operations and Claims will be certified by the VA and able to access VA computer systems in support of veterans claims. Twelve SDVS employees participated in this training.

- The Governor’s Annual Veterans Day Proclamation Signing Ceremony will be conducted at 1:00 p.m., Thursday, October 29, 2009 in the North Wing (Second Floor) of the Capitol.

- The Supermarket Proclamation Signing Ceremony will at 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, November 18, 2009 in the Conference Room, City of Griffin Building, 100 South Hill Street, Griffin, Georgia 30223.

- The Supermarket of Veterans Benefits will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Thursday, December 10, 2009 at the National Guard Armory, Highway 19 S in Griffin, Georgia 30224.

Headlines Of Interest To GA Veterans

Secretary Shinseki Announces \$17 Million in Homeless Grants

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced that 19 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will share more than \$17 million in grants to community groups to create 1,155 beds for homeless Veterans this year. Georgia is among the affected states. (10/6/09)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1795>

VA Goes Green

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced a new “Green Routine” campaign to kick off Energy Awareness Month at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The campaign is designed to increase the awareness among VA employees of their environmental impact as individuals and as members of the federal government. (10/5/09)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1792>

Veterans Give High Marks to VA Pharmacies

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced J.D. Power and Associates, a firm specializing in consumer surveys, has given VA pharmacies some of the highest customer satisfaction scores in a national sampling of pharmacy customers. (10/1/09)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1791>

Secretary Shinseki Announces Ability to Sign Up for Emergency Education Benefit Payments

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki today announced further outreach to Veteran-students eligible for a special emergency payment of their education benefits. Veterans can now apply online beginning Oct. 2. Veteran-students can also request courtesy transportation to VA regional benefits offices. (9/30/09)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1790>

VA Staffs Office for Survivors of Vets, Service Members

To strengthen the programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the survivors of the nation’s veterans and military personnel, VA has staffed an office to serve as their advocate, with a charter that includes creating or modifying programs, benefits and services. (9/28/09)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1786>

Participation in the New Post-9/11 GI Bill Continues to Grow

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that it has provided certificates of eligibility to nearly 200,000 applicants for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. Over 61,000 payments totaling over \$50 million to schools and students have been issued since the August 1, 2009, implementation of the new program. (9/23/09)

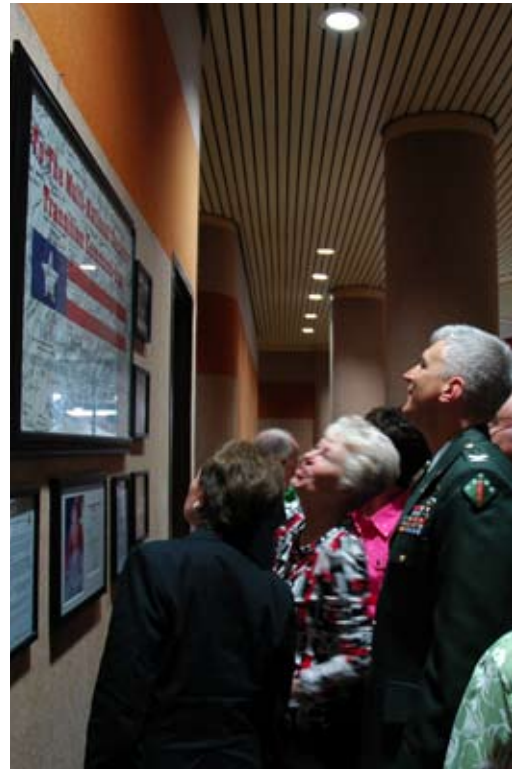
<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1778>

VA Warns Veterans of Telephone Prescription Scam

The Department of Veterans Affairs is warning Veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information. (9/17/09)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1769>

A Banner From The War Zone



The Buford-Lanier Woman's Club sent this banner to Iraq, where it was signed by members of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. Home from its travels, the banner was donated by the club to the James H. Sloppy Floyd Veterans Memorial Building, where it was placed on the west tower plaza level. Commissioner Wheeler spoke at the dedication ceremony, as did Colonel Mark A. Valeri. The event was emceed by SDVS Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations & Claims Tom Cook.

Education Benefits Emergency Payments

Background Information

1. I have heard about education advanced payments. What are they?

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has authorized advanced education payments up to \$3,000 for veterans who have applied for VA educational benefits and who have not yet received their monthly education payment as of October 2, 2009. **This is an advance payment of the veteran's housing and book allowance only, as the tuition payment will be paid to the school.**

Obtaining Payment

2. How do I obtain an advance payment and what do I need to provide?

Starting October 2nd, you may go to one of VA's 57 regional offices with a government issued photo ID (Driver's License, Military ID, etc.) and proof you are enrolled in school (class schedule, admission letter, enrollment verification letter, etc.)

You will be required to sign for the payment upon receipt.

3. What if I cannot make it to a Regional Office?

Currently VA is only offering advance payments at one of our 57 offices, however we are looking at other alternatives.

4. Can I receive more than one advance payment?

This is a one-time advance payment, which will be recouped from future education payments. Only one payment is authorized per veteran, up to \$3000.

Payment Details

5. I am a veteran, am I eligible for an advance payment?

Yes, if you are currently enrolled in school under a VA education program.

List of VA Education Programs:

- a. Ch33 - Post-9/11 GI Bill
- b. Ch 30 - Montgomery GI Bill
- c. Chapter 1606 - Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve

d. Ch 1607 – Reserve Education Assistance Program

6. I am a dependent, am I eligible for an advance payment?

No, payments are only available to veterans.

7. If I received my education payment on October 1st, am I still eligible for a \$3000 advance payment?

No, advance payments are only authorized for veterans who did not receive a payment on October 1st.

8. Will I have to pay this advance payment back to VA?

This payment will be recouped from future VA payments. However, if you stop attending school during the semester, recoupment by VA will not be possible and you will have to repay the advance payment.

9. What if I want less than \$3000?

Veterans may choose to receive a payment less than \$3000, however, only one advance payment is authorized regardless of amount.

Future Payments

10. When can I expect future payments?

After the advance payment is recouped, you can expect future payments at the beginning of each month, which will likely start in November.

11. How does this emergency payment affect my future education payments?

This payment will be recouped from future VA payments, however, if you stop attending school during the semester, recoupment by VA will not be possible and you will have to repay the advance payment. The exact recoupment amount will be determined once your education claim is processed.

Additional Information

This is the latest information concerning the education advance payments. At this time, there is no additional information that can be provided or number to refer the claimant to for additional information. If a claimant needs more information, they should contact the National Call Center for updated information or visit the education website at www.gibill.va.gov.

The Flag Over Camp Phoenix

